

Remarks

The Office Action mailed May 20, 2004 has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1, 3-4, 6-15, and 17-27 are now pending in this application. Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 stand rejected. Claims 2, 3, 8-11, and 14 are objected to. Claims 15 and 17-27 have been allowed. Claims 2, 5, 16, and 28-55 are canceled as explained below.

The present amendment is intended to place the application in condition for allowance by incorporating subject matter indicated as allowable in the Office Action into independent Claim 1, namely amending Claim 1 to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 2. Accordingly, Claim 2 has been canceled. Applicants wish to emphasize that the cancellation of Claims 2, 5, 16, and 28-55 is without prejudice, and expressly reserve the right to file a continuation application or applications for further prosecution of the subject matter contained in these claims. Accordingly, Applicants expressly disavow any intention to surrender the subject matter of Claims 2, 5, 16, and 28-55 by cancellation in the instant application, and reserve the right to prosecute these claims in future applications.

Additionally, the present amendment is intended to place the application in condition for allowance by canceling the non-elected Claims 28-55. Applicants wish to emphasize that the cancellation of Claims 28-55 is without prejudice, and Applicants reserve the right to file a divisional application or applications to prosecute the subject matter of these claims.

The rejection of Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ruffin (U.S. Patent No. 6,219,654) in view of Conklin et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,141,653) (Conklin) and further in view of Guinta et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,161,101) (Guinta) and further in view of Razin (U.S. Patent No. 6,125,377) is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 2. Accordingly, Claim 1 is patentable over Ruffin in view of Conklin and further in view of Guinta and further in view of Razin.

Claims 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 depend from independent Claim 1 which is submitted to be in condition for allowance. When the recitations of Claims 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 are also patentable over Ruffin in view of Conklin and further in view of Guinta and further in view of Razin.

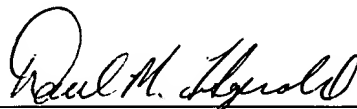
For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, and 13 be withdrawn.

Claims 2, 3, 8-11, and 14 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended Claim 1 to include the recitations of allowable dependent Claim 2. Claim 2 has been canceled. Accordingly, Claims 3, 8-11, and 14 are patentable.

Claims 15 and 17-27 have been allowed.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all the claims now active in the application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,



Daniel M. Fitzgerald
Registration No. 38,880
ARMSTRONG TEASDALE LLP
One Metropolitan Square, Suite 2600
St. Louis, Missouri 63102-2740
(314) 621-5070